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SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR'S PATHWAYS PREPARATIONS

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. The GOES is pushing hard to make the next Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas (Pathways) ministerial meeting focus on concrete actions. In February 5 meetings with visiting State and USTR officials, the GOES proposed April 28-29 for the technical and ministerial meetings in El Salvador. They will send invitations and a Chair's paper to advance work on action items in each of the four pillars prior to the April meetings. The GOES wants to hold a meeting with the pillars' coordinators as soon as possible, but is waiting for additional signs from the Department about USG commitment to Pathways and who might attend the ministerial. Foreign Minister Marisol Argueta wants to discuss the Pathways ministerial with the Secretary in a future office call. Civil society and the private sector were very supportive of Pathways and suggested how they could contribute to the initiative. End Summary.

MINEC and MFA on Board and on Task

¶2. (SBU) Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) Director of Foreign Policy Werner Romero and the Ministry of Economy's (MINEC) CAFTA Office Director Jorge Guzman led the GOES team in the February 5 discussions with WHA/EPSC Director Matt Rooney, EEB/TPP/BTA Director Bob Manogue, USTR Trade Capacity Coordinator Fran Huegel and EPSC Trade Officer Susan Garro. Romero stressed (in line with USG views) that the GOES wants specific actions to come out of the ministerial and "not just another declaration." Guzman said that CAFTA helped strengthen Salvadoran institutions, such as their Ministries of Environment and Labor as well as Customs. Pathways could build upon that progress.

¶3. (SBU) Romero said that Pathways could be used to harmonize the differences in existing trade agreements with the United States and among the other countries in the region. They agreed that civil society, Q{QuQ}H@p.}QS.Hor, must play an active role in the Pathways process. The GOES had spoken with respected Salvadoran think tank FUSADES and suggested that FUSADES could join with other U.S. and Latin American think tanks, and perhaps universities, in the initiative. All present agreed that civil society should be involved early in the process, before any final decision on declarations or actions.

¶4. (SBU) Foreign Minister Argueta is eager to speak with the Secretary about Pathways and has requested a meeting with the Secretary. Romero added that the GOES and other Pathways countries are looking for signs of the new U.S. administration's commitment to Pathways. The GOES will send out invitations for a technical meeting on April 28 followed by the ministerial meeting on April 29. They will include a delegates' guide and a chair's paper to focus discussions within each Pathways pillar.

¶5. (SBU) A coordination meeting will be held as soon as possible for the four pillar coordinators: Increasing Opportunities (Honduras);

Deepening Trade Architecture (Chile); Cooperation on Development and Competitiveness (Panama); and, Cooperation on Labor and Environment (Peru). Other countries would also be welcome to attend the meeting. (Note: Romero told us on February 12 that the IDB had agreed to host the coordination meeting at its Washington headquarters. That meeting has now been set for March 2. Romero also said the GOES would change the ministerial dates to accommodate the Secretary's participation, which FM Argueta confirmed in her February 13 meeting with Charge (reftel). End note.)

Innovative Programs and Desire to Participate

¶16. (U) The delegation had separate meetings with FUSADES, NGOs FEPADE and FUNDE, the American Chamber of Commerce in El Salvador (AmCham) and ESEN, a private university in El Salvador. Each group wanted to participate and embraced the action-item agenda focus of the initiative. FUSADES welcomed contacts with other think tanks. FEPADE could share its community college equivalent programs and business incubator program modeled on a Colombian program. The AmCham said that Pathways was discussed at the recent Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America (AACLA) meeting and was seen as a vehicle for allowing the private sector to contribute to trade and development discussions. ESEN was eager to share its new on-line export diploma program and how ESEN, supposedly unlike many Latin American universities, developed links with the private sector.

Conclusion

¶17. (SBU) The GOES is eager to move ahead on the Pathways ministerial and this visit reassured them of USG interest in the region. They are focused on achieving practical, demonstrable outcomes from the ministerial and the Pathways initiative in general. The GOES is looking to the USG for a solid commitment to Pathways as soon as possible, which would facilitate the significant preparation work that will have to be done before the ministerial. The other major component of the Pathways initiative, incorporating civil society in a meaningful way, is another area that will soon need to be more fully addressed.

¶18. (U) This cable has been cleared by Matt Rooney and Robert Manogue.

Blau